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January 8, 2014

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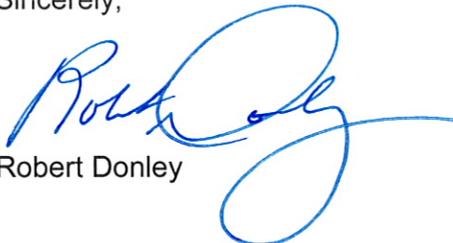
Re: Beginning Farmer Center – Annual Report FY 2013

Dear Members of the Iowa General Assembly:

Pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 266.39E, enclosed is the annual report on the Beginning Farmer Center at Iowa State University.

If there are any questions concerning this report, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Robert Donley

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Enclosure

cc: Robin Madison, LSA
Legislative Liaisons
Legislative Log

Beginning Farmer Center

ISU Extension to Agriculture and Natural Resources
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Resources to help our next generation of farmers

Objectives

The Beginning Farmer Center (BFC) was established at Iowa State University (ISU) by the 1994 Iowa General Assembly. Objectives of the Center include:

- coordinating educational programs and services for beginning farmers,
- assessing needs of beginning and retiring farmers to identify opportunities for programs and services, and
- developing statewide programs to educate beginning and retiring farm families.

Organization

The Center is a joint effort of the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and ISU Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) which delivers the Center's programs and activities. Dr. John Lawrence, associate dean and director of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Extension, serves as interim director. Staff includes the Center's administrator, John Baker, attorney for the Iowa Concern Hotline; David Baker, full-time farm transition specialist; and Andrew Larson, the ISU Small Farms Program specialist. ISUEO Agricultural and Natural Resources program specialists assist with programming on farm transition and beginning farmers.

Major Activities

AgLink

The AgLink program is designed to facilitate the introduction of retiring farmers to young people who want to get started in agriculture. Individuals register with the BFC and their information is managed in a computerized database. The BFC transition specialist works to find interested parties and facilitates initial discussions.

The Center has 626 active beginning farmer files and 33 active retiring farmer files. During 2013 there were 654 calls from beginning farmers and 102 from retiring farmers. In 2013 the Center facilitated three matches.

The BFC works closely with ISU Extension staff and external partners and stakeholders to identify the needs of beginning and exiting farmers and better coordinate and leverage resources to address these needs. We continually try to understand and address farmer motivations for not retiring or transitioning the farming operation to the next generation. This is one of the major problems faced by beginning farmers. The upcoming Farm and Rural Life Poll will address farmer retirement plans.

Returning To The Farm

Returning To The Farm is a four-day seminar for families of college juniors and seniors who plan to join their family farm operation after graduation. Topics include communication, retirement, strategic planning, conflict resolution, goal setting, determining values, business analysis, farm planning and management.

The Center has worked with USDA-Farm Service Agency, Iowa Finance Authority, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, and five community colleges to provide farm business succession seminars for their students and with Farm Credit Services to provide farm business succession seminars throughout the state.

Individual farm analysis

The Center provides succession facilitation, farm visits and in some cases individual financial analysis of existing farm situations. During 2013 there were 23 farm visits reaching approximately 83 individuals. Many of the consultations are with non-farming, non-resident heirs as to the future of their family farms. This is an increasing trend in farmland ownership.

Beginning Farmer Network

The Transition Specialist serves as a faculty adviser and support for an ISU student organization, the Beginning Farmer Network (BFN). Student interest is growing in farming with the increase in the BFN to 40 students. Students are interested in new and diverse forms of farming. The BFN sponsored its 8th annual conference in 2013. Approximately 105 people attended.

Advisory Council

Following the recommendation of the 2011 external review committee the Center established an advisory council that met in February 2013. The council will meet annually with BFC staff to review progress and make recommendations on programming. Members include representation from USDA-Farm Service Agency, agricultural lenders, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, attorneys assisting estate planning, agricultural NGOs, and active farmers.

Outreach activities

Presentations were made to commodity groups, attorneys, farmers, government officials and others interested in beginning and retiring farmer issues. Staff members conducted 42 media interviews and spoke to numerous national and international audiences.

The Center helped cosponsor several events including the BFN conference on the Iowa State campus, Iowa Farmer - Veteran Coalition of Iowa Conference and the Young Farmers Conference at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center. The Center helped develop and presented at the Urban/Ag Academy, a conference designed to help urban legislators better understand agriculture. BFC staff participated in the Iowa Organic Conference, Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference and Iowa Farm Bureau annual meeting.

The administrator serves as the chairman of the International Farm Transition Network, a network of state, university and private organizations that helps beginning farmers. It shares information and has established standards and provides certification for professionals working in farm transitions and has certified 24 individuals as Farm Succession Coordinators.

The Center continues to upgrade its website and is exploring opportunities to provide space for collaborating organizations. Please visit the site at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>

Research activities

In 2013 the Center co-led a larger Iowa State beginning farmer grant project which involves an organized working group of concerned and involved stakeholders around the issue of beginning farmers. The working group is developing curriculum and tools to better educate people on succession planning and generally increase communication and coordination across Iowa on farm transition issues. The Center staff are members of other grants related to beginning farmer issues.

Leveraging the Advantages

The BFC partners and coordinates with agencies and organizations that are serving beginning farmers. While the attention and resources to farm transitions and new farmers has cycled over time, the BFC at ISU continues to provide research, education and services to retiring and beginning farmers and the policy makers who address these critical needs.

The BFC works closely with the Drake University Agricultural Law Center by providing speakers and materials. The Center also employs law students part-time to work with the administrator. The Center works with ISU Extension and Outreach staff to offer materials, speakers and financial support for programs to help beginning and exiting farmers. The BFC also provides speakers and materials to the Iowa Bar Association and works closely on program efforts with several ISU academic departments and Centers including the Extension Farm Management team and the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation.

Future Activities

The Center will pursue opportunities to partner with others to address the needs of beginning farmers, but will continue support for its core programs: AgLink, individual farm financial analysis and work to motivate farmers to pass on an operation as a unit rather than in pieces. Research also is needed to develop and analyze alternative business strategies for both beginning and retiring farmers.

Recommendations

The Center recommends that state and federal legislators consider the impact of legislation on beginning farmers and those contemplating retirement. The Center recommends a tax credit similar to that available to exiting farmers who lease farm business assets to a beginning farmer be extended to beginning farmers. The Center recommends an increase in funding to expand and enhance its work. The Center budget has remained the same since its creation in 1994.

For more information, contact John Lawrence, director, ISU ANR Extension and Outreach, (515) 294-7801; John Baker, BFC attorney and administrator; Dave

Baker, Farm Transition specialist, at (toll-free) (877) BFC-1999; or Andy Larson, Small Farms specialist at (563) 583-6496. The Beginning Farmer Center web site can be found at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>

. . . and justice for all

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and July 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cathann A. Kress, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.

Revised January 2014

